

Testimony Given Before The Hearing Of The House Of Representatives
Committee On Agriculture, Washington, D.C., Concerning Bill H.R.
12488 (Poage) and Bill H.R. 9743 (Resnick) - March 8, 1966.

I am Dr. Clarence Dennis, Chairman of the Department of Surgery at The State University of New York Downstate Medical School and President of The Society for Vascular Surgery, and also represent The International Cardio-vascular Society. My primary responsibility as a professor of surgery is education, firstly of students in medical school, and secondly of medical graduates who seek to become well-trained surgeons.

I shall clarify to you that the proposed bills as written, aside from being unnecessary in the light of existing laws, are a serious threat to the health of all of us.

During the past thirty years, there has been an explosion of scientific progress with no previous counterpart in the history of mankind. The advances have been too rapid to be grasped in full by even the most brilliant mind, and the scientific panorama about us is changing with breathtaking rapidity. Twenty years ago poliomyelitis was rampant; today research has made it rare. Twenty years ago congenital defects within the heart could not be surgically corrected; today open-heart operations are brilliantly effective, developed through work with dogs. Twenty years ago damage to the arteries and great vessels, whether from injury or from the changes associated with age, could not be consistently repaired, and patients with gangrene of the feet, either with or without diabetes, nearly always lost either their legs or their lives; today successful repair or replacement has become commonplace, again as a result of work on dogs. These are but a few examples.

A corollary of this rapid expansion of scientific activity has been an immense increase in the volume of the scientific literature. It is that scholar with an intellect critically trained and cultured in the processes of sound scientific investigation who can best sift in the literature the real from the unreal, the true from the untrue, the promising from the unpromising, the safe from the unsafe. The life of any one of us may depend today or tomorrow upon the exercise of such critical judgment.

The basic introduction to the methods of research and to the patterns of thought in research enables the student to gain the same critical analytical approach to everything he may seek to learn in the medical world. To an alert doctor, every patient represents an individual research problem. The student is therefore taught the methods of research analysis and approach, in order that he may use them in that fashion most favorable to the patient.

While my presentation of the importance of basic research experience in the education of a good doctor or investigator may not have been appreciated by some who listen, the paramount importance of basic animal experimentation

to progress in the provision of health measures to mankind is obvious to all who care to understand and think.

Within the past few months, noisy publicity upon some instances of dishonest and evil methods in providing animals for sale to reputable and indeed highly esteemed educational institutions has led to a change in the laws of Pennsylvania aimed particularly at dogs to be utilized for experimental purposes. A result has been strangulation of our flow of appropriate animals.

The result of this in turn has been a serious compromise of our medical educational processes and research endeavors in Brooklyn. Teaching programs have had to be curtailed at the expense of the education provided. Research programs have been curtailed at increased cost to us all as taxpayers, and our effectiveness in helping you has been hampered.

It may seem that I have concentrated upon the need for proper utilization of certain experimental animals in our activities toward the betterment of mankind, rather than upon the problems relating to animal dealers with which the bills under consideration are concerned. The bills in question, I call upon you to note, will be crippling to the training of the quality of doctors which the nation deserves as well as to the improvement of our knowledge on how to deal with disease unless changed as has been suggested in earlier testimony. They therefore constitute a threat to the health of all of us as they stand.

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